

INCOMING TELEGRAM

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Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL SECURITY INFORMATION

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TO: Secretary of State

NO: 1036, January 14, 5 p.m.

PRIORITY

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Reversions to techniques of 1930's in charges of terroristic
activities on part group Soviet doctors evokes several inter-
esting considerations.

It cannot (rpt not) be completely excluded, of course, that
there was indeed some sort of conspiratorial movement. It also
might be argued that the "plot" is a complete fabrication of
the ruling group cold-bloodedly designed for the achievement
of some political aim. It seems at any rate to corroborate
belief held by many that Soviet ruling group lives in atmosphere
of constant psychotic mistrust and suspicion. While it would
seem unreasonable to assume that they believe the charges as made,
it seems quite likely that the latter reflect the ruling circles
dominant fear of uncontrolled thought and discussion. It has
been often assumed that serious differences of opinion on policy
matters exist in the Soviet hierarchy up to and including the
Politburo. The present occurrence plus past economic controver-
sies now (rpt now) being aired do not diminish such opinions.
However, if this is not (rpt not) the case but the top leaders
had reason to believe there had only been an increase in the
number of small clandestine discussion circles (which have been
a feature of Russian life since Czarist times), particularly
among the intelligentsia the matter would probably appear
serious enough to them to require the most severe repressive
measures.

The patent lack of reality of the charges explainable perhaps by
the following hypotheses:

1. Publicized plot must be exceedingly simple in order to be
understood by the great masses of Soviet people, even though
such simplicity impedes fabrication of logical chain of circum-
stances and/or (2) Soviets not (rpt not) interested in con-
vincing their people but rather wish force down their throats
obviously false allegations, particularly distasteful to in-
telligentsia, as overt easily recognizable further move toward
thought

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thought control. (If a conspiratorial group has had within its power a half dozen leading military figures for nine years since the death of Shcherbakov in 1945, it is surprising that some success had not (rpt not) been achieved and that after all this time plot near in fruition foiled only by means last minute intervention Security Police).

Perhaps heavy play given Jewish bourgeois nationalist aspect should cause us re-evaluate Jewish element recent Czech trials. However, very identification of these groups as "Jewish Bourgeois nationalist" lessens to certain degree hypothesis which has been advanced that anti-Semitism as such is important and growing element Soviet and satellite policy.

Criticism of MGB for failure uncover plot earlier may be taken by some observers as further indication of lessened stature of Beriya. In absence further evidence of this however, it seems to Embassy MGB criticism and call for strengthened army and security forces, increased vigilance etc. may be warning to Soviet people to expect more intensive disciplinary measures plus stricter economic control mechanisms. This renewal of emphasis on discipline and threat of repressive measure quite consistent with new party statutes and subsequent comment thereon.

Re status Beriya, it should be noted he listed as being present with Stalin January 12 at Bolshoi Theater following Molotov and Malenkov. This might be considered usual position in hierarchy.

While basic motivation these charges probably arises from chronic mistrust of ruling circles, as in all similar cases, advantage is taken of opportunity gain other purposes including attack on "joint" organization (probably Joint Distribution Committee) with tie-in to US and UK, continued anti-US campaign, including bacteria warfare, atrocities, Kojedo, etc, probably had lost its momentum and present charges taken as means of providing vigorous shot in arm.

One of persons named as transmitting instruction is Dr. Shimeliovich the Director of Botkin Hospital where serious ailments foreign diplomats treated. Mikhoell who died January 1948 under strange circumstances known as President Soviet Jewish anti-Fascist Committee and reputed to have complained of anti-Jewish elements Soviet policy.

Tass announcement

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Tass announcement that investigation will be concluded shortly plus recent Praha precedent may foreshadow show trials here in reasonably near future.

BEAM

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